

DALLISTA™

Hide in Plain Sight

By Bill De Franza



An Adventure for 4-6 Characters of Levels 1-3





HIDE IN PLAIN SIGHT



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INTRODUCTION

A plan has been set in motion and brave adventurers have been called in. Rescue the princess and battle and fight an ogre and those behind the kidnapping ought to be a typical, run-of-the-mill job. Unbeknownst to the party, this was but the opening move to a greater plan. Distraction, deception, and misdirection will be the undoing of Goodhampshire.

Notes for the Game Master

Hide in Plain Sight is a Ballista™ adventure for a small group of low-level characters (about 8-10 total levels). It is designed to be playable in one to three sessions and to fit into or start any campaign in any setting.

Before play, the Game Master should familiarize themselves with the material to better understand and set up relevant plot twists. Almost everything the PCs learn until the end of the adventure is a lie or half-truth and the GM will need to be familiar with the background and plot in order to reveal everything correctly. Notes on how to simplify the adventure have also been included.

Background

Twenty-five years ago, a nigh-immortal villain by the name of Gremulak and his telepathically linked "Thanes" rallied an army of bandits, humanoids, and giants that nearly conquered the entire kingdom. Several brave heroes set out to defeat Gremulak and to disperse the evil army. Two of these bold adventurers were brothers named Antar and Jarek – both young knights-errant. The party managed to defeat Gremulak and they imprisoned him in a magical coffin. One of the enchantments placed on the coffin ensured that none of his thanes could touch it, nor would it permit Gremulak to free himself. Antar and Jarek were subsequently granted land and the titles of 'Lord' as reward and the brother knights took the precaution of moving Gremulak's prison to a small, remote farming village called Goodhampshire where they could keep watch over him and ensure that his thanes would never find it.

The brothers built a small manor in Goodhampshire. Antar became the mayor, while Jarek became the Captain of the town's tiny militia. Together, the brothers became the protectors of the town and kept secret vigil over Gremulak's prison. As it turned out, the manor served as a perfect way to conceal and protect the magical prison. The brothers became comfortable in their new lives, settling down with the locals, and helping fend off the occasional orc horde.

But Gremulak's thanes have not been idle. Two months ago, a thane and wizard by the name of Jortan Grieve finally divined the location of Gremulak's prison. This information was then passed on to a doppelganger named Zaharrm het Zagroth who managed to infiltrate Goodhampshire shortly thereafter. Given the doppelganger's nature, he was able to use his shape-shifting abilities to disguise himself as

various members of the community. Notably, these disguises include Fianne Goodhampshire, who is Antar's teenaged daughter, Jarek, and Antar Goodhampshire himself, and Olai Keem who is chancellor and chief advisor for the brothers. With time, Zagroth was able to find a secret entrance to the manor and discover the hiding place of his master's prison.

Roughly two weeks ago, Zagroth the doppelganger arranged for Jarek to be "accidentally" injured in a jousting tournament. While Jarek convalesced, Zagroth promptly murdered him in order to steal his identity and take his place. He disposed of the body by taking it to his lair, in the nearby ghost town of Thaolin, and feeding it to his 'pet'. Zagroth is now pretending to be Jarek full time.

In this disguise, Zagroth orchestrated a plot to kidnap Antar's daughter, Fianne Goodhampshire, as part of a plan to trick people into freeing Gremulak. Beyond the planned misdirection, the fate of Fianne is sealed as far as Zagroth is concerned, as she has been promised to the thane wizard to use as a human sacrifice for some occult rite. However, it is because of the kidnapping that the characters become involved with this whole affair.

Zagroth's intent is to manipulate them with false clues and lead them to believe that they are rescuing Fianne, when in reality will be Zagroth himself in her form. Using the likeness of the girl to gain their trust, Zagroth will lie to the party and persuade that Jarek is actually an evil imposter impersonating Lord Antar with a magical mask, and that they have the real Lord Antar trapped in the dungeon below the manor. Zagroth (as Fianne) will lead the party back to the manor to release the one they believe is 'Lord Antar', but who is actually Gremulak.

Once Gremulak is freed, the doppelganger intends to lay the blame for any of the murders and wrongdoings committed on the adventurers. Should the characters find the real Fianne before returning to the manor, she will act as the doppelganger's innocent pawn, and will corroborate his story. Zagroth will have had the chance to convince her of the story with weeks of lies in all his various disguises.

The characters are lead through this scenario by lies and half-truths and will likely not realize what is happening until it is too late. They will have a chance to redeem themselves by trying to rescue the real Fianne. As an additional twist, the GM could opt to have the party discover Olai Keem imprisoned in the doppelganger's lair, meaning the Keem they dealt with was Zagroth in yet another guise.

Notes on Playing Zagroth the Doppelganger

Because Zagroth can read minds, he is the consummate liar. The GM can represent this by using every trick available to them. This could include telling different players different details, passing secret notes, or even changing the details of things on the fly. Remember that the villain can tell if the characters believe him or not and that the story can change to best suit its goals.

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

The characters can either begin play in the Hamlet of Goodhampshire, or they could be traveling between locations and making a stop there, and discovering this adventure waiting for them.

Goodhampshire is a tiny hamlet in the woods, not very remote, but too small to be on maps. One side of town is dominated by Goodhampshire manor and the rest is made up of several houses belonging to families who enjoy a simple agrarian life. These families trade foodstuffs for Jarek and Antar's protection from bands of humanoids and monsters of the wilderness.

Shortly after dawn, and perhaps when the party wakes after spending the night in town, the characters hear or read a proclamation calling for adventurers. Alternately, they could be entering town early in the day just as the town crier reads this announcement, or see it being posted in the local pub or town square:

Hear ye! A great travesty has befallen our kind Lord Antar Goodhampshire – the abduction of his daughter Fianne by foul monsters! By his noble grace, Lord Goodhampshire implores all champions to report to Goodhampshire manor to undertake a quest to rescue fair Fianne! Rewards will include gold and the Lord's eternal favour!

If the players decide to try and gather information from the public, the GM can feed them one or more of the following rumours:

Rumours

1. “Antar is a fine man, but his brother is an evil fiend! Look out for that one!” **TRUE, now that Zagroth has taken Jarek's place.**
2. “The girl must have been kidnapped by evil cultists from Thaolin, the ghost town north of here.” **FALSE, though Thaolin is a ghost town.**
3. “Goodhampshire manor hides many secrets that would ruin the brothers' reputation.” **Mostly FALSE – the only secret is that the knights are protecting the world by keeping Gremulak prisoner.**
4. “Antar's daughter is up to no good, she's a loose tart, that one!” **FALSE – the real Fianne is good and kind to a fault.**
5. “There's a dragon's hoard of treasure hidden away under the manor, if only someone was brave enough to go get it from that cheap bastard!” **FALSE.**
6. Grey Bart, the oldest man in Goodhampshire says, “Some o' de older folk remembers de bad times when dat Gremulak's army o' goblins n' giants a'most sacked the 'hole kingdom. But none o' dem remembers how bad it really t'was. I'll tell ye if ye buys me a mug 'a ale...” If the PCs engage Grey Bart in conversation, he'll let them know that Gremulak has several powerful lieutenants, and that Antar and

Jarek Goodhampshire helped defeat Gremulak, “back in the day.”
All TRUE.

7. *“Antar and Jarek and their lot have always been good to me and mine. I’ll not hear any bad words about them!” True – the brothers and their associates protect the hamlet from orcs and the like.*
8. *“The brothers were skilled fighters when they were in their prime. Real heroes among men, they was. I hear Antar’s daughter is learnin’ to be a ranger like their elf friend.” All TRUE.*
9. *“Antar’s chancellor, Olai Keem, is a good man and the real brains behind how this town runs.” While TRUE, the brother knights are not stupid.*
10. *“Grey Bart may be crazy, but I have heard people say that Gremulak fellow really was a nasty bastard.” TRUE.*

Goodhampshire Manor

The manor is the largest building in the hamlet, with a sprawling lawn and high iron fence. Several guards with large guard dogs patrol the grounds. A guard awaits you at the gate.

This guard will let the party in when they explain they are responding to the call to arms.

A butler meets you at the manor’s door. He brings you into a large but simply decorated audience chamber. The chamber has a large desk at the far end, and standing before it is a tall old man with stark white hair. He is wearing a maroon velvet suit and a gold chain. The butler says this is the Lord’s Chancellor, Olai Keem.

Chancellor Keem is a true ally to Goodhampshire and is not at all aware of Zagroth’s plot to release Gremulak. Depending on how many plot twists the GM desires, they may decide that the person the characters meet is actually the doppelganger Zagroth using Keem’s form as a disguise.

Chancellor Keem greets you and apologizes that Lord Goodhampshire himself is not present. Keem explains that Lord Goodhampshire is distraught from the abduction of his daughter and the recent loss of a good friend. He says, “I’ll be brief. Fianne was abducted two nights ago. The Lord’s good friend – and mine too – Fallarian Greyskies, identified ogre tracks and found a note demanding a ransom of gold, otherwise she is to be killed at midnight tonight. Greyskies tracked the ogre to the abandoned church in the ghost town of Thaolin north of here. He tried to rescue Fianne, but was gravely injured battling the ogre and several other monsters. He had to retreat. He was alone, so I am confident that a hearty group such as yourselves will be able to finish them off. Fallarian warns there is some sort of wolf-like beast that can become invisible, so it is a dangerous enemy.” Keem pauses for a moment before continuing. “Sadly, he died of his wounds

before healers could save him. But his sacrifice ensured that we discovered where to find Fianne. Please help us rescue the girl."

If asked, Keem explains that Greyskies was an Elf ranger and one of his, and Goodhampshire's, oldest friends. He also surmises that the ogre is a pawn of some more intelligent fiend, since an ogre would certainly be illiterate. This is true, since Zagroth the doppelganger left the note and is the one who arranged for the ogre to raid the manor.

Keem will provide horses for the party if they need them, though he does expect them to return the mounts. He will give them an extra horse for Fianne to ride back on.

He explains that the Ghost Town of Thaolin is about three hours' ride north. If asked, he will explain that the town grew around a remote church run by good clerics until it was sacked about twenty-five years ago by an army led by the warlord Gremulak. The town fell to evil and then was abandoned. The local militia is simply too small to wipe out what now resides there and people have been keeping away from it ever since. It's generally considered safe during the day.

Chancellor Keem offers the adventurers the following rewards for rescuing Fianne. If the GM decides that this is Zagroth in disguise, the rewards can be ramped up much higher since he has no intent of actually following through on these promises.

- 100 gp each (the party can negotiate up to 150 gp each, but Keem says he cannot afford more)
- The repair or replacement of the party's armour and weapons
- Room and board in the Goodhampshire Inn to recuperate if injured
- Keem may be persuaded to give the party the horses if they negotiate hard
- Lord Goodhampshire's eternal favour (details are vague, but Keem may imply that if one of the party members is distinguished enough, a profitable marriage could be arranged, leading to land and title)

Once the party agrees to save Fianne, Keem explains that she is a slight girl with fair skin and long, straight, blonde hair. He stresses that the rewards can only be collected after her safe return, gives the party the directions to the abandoned church, urging them to set off immediately.

If the GM decides that this is the doppelganger Zagroth, Keem will instruct the butler and staff not to disturb him all day, then Zagroth will go and enter Jarek's room, where he now lives, and use his hidden magic carpet to transport him to his lair hidden away under the church. Once he arrives there, he will then transform into Fianne's likeness and climbs up to the cave under the church to await the party's arrival. The real Fianne is actually a captive in Zagroth's lair further down the gorge.



JOURNEY TO THAOLIN

The trip to the old church in Thaolin is a three-hour ride away. At the GM's discretion, they may add one random encounters during their travels by using the following table. If preferring to leave it to chance, a random encounter will result on a 1 on a roll of 1d6.

Using the table: Roll 1d6 between dawn and noon or if closer to Goodhampshire. Roll 1d6+3 at other times or if closer to Thaolin.

D10	ENCOUNTER TABLE
<p><i>Average Townsfolk</i> SZ: M; MV 30'; SV: P HD: 1d8; AC 9 (11) AT: 1d3 SP: None</p>	1 Goodhampshire Townsfolk (1-3)
<p><i>Brigand</i> SZ: M; MV 30'; SV: P HD 1d8; AC 7 (13) AT: Shortsword or Hand axe (1d6) SP: None</p>	2 Brigands (see below)
<p><i>Goblin</i> SZ: S; MV 20'; SV: P HD: 1d6; AC 6 (14) AT: Spear (1d6) SP: Darkvision 60', -1 to hit in sunlight</p>	3 Goblins (2-5)
<p><i>Giant Toad</i> SZ: M; MV 10'/30'; SV: P HD: 2d8; AC 8 (12) AT: Tongue (1d4) SP: Swallow, Camouflage</p>	4 Giant Toads (2)
<p><i>Giant Toad</i> SZ: M; MV 10'/30'; SV: P HD: 2d8; AC 8 (12) AT: Tongue (1d4) SP: Swallow, Camouflage</p>	5-7 Deer or Bear (1)
<p><i>Giant Toad</i> SZ: M; MV 10'/30'; SV: P HD: 2d8; AC 8 (12) AT: Tongue (1d4) SP: Swallow, Camouflage</p>	8-9 Bear Trap (1)
<p><i>Giant Toad</i> SZ: M; MV 10'/30'; SV: P HD: 2d8; AC 8 (12) AT: Tongue (1d4) SP: Swallow, Camouflage</p>	10 Zombies (1-4)

Goodhampshire Townsfolk: If the party stops to talk to townsfolk, feel free to provide them with another rumor.

Brigands: The total number of brigands will match the size of the adventuring party. Half of them will attempt to distract the party while the other half will try to sneak in and steal any horses or equipment possible. These brigands will flee rather than fight to the death given the chance. They carry 3d6 sp each.

Goblins: These goblins will fight until 1 or 2 of them remain before considering fleeing.

Giant Toads: The two toads will initiate a fight but will leave if either one of them is killed. If the party decides to flee the encounter, the toads will not give pursuit.

Bear or Deer: If encountered and left alone, they will run.



THE ABANDONED CHURCH

As you approach the town of Thaolin, you can clearly see that the church is the largest building at the town's centre, with a small graveyard adjacent to it. The rest of the town is a collection of collapsed ruins, ivy, and weeds.

If the characters decide to explore other buildings surrounding the church, they find nothing of value or interest. Should they decide to explore the graveyard, perhaps they may have to contend with the restless dead at the GM's discretion.

AREA 1: Patio

The church is a dilapidated ruin in a very poor state of disrepair. The windows are all broken and there are several holes in the roof. The building is about two stories tall with four broken columns collapsed across the patio, with rubble and broken glass strewn everywhere. A large, crude padlock locks the front doors which looks new.

Access to the church may be gained in one of two ways. It is possible to break the doors apart (**STR: CL2**) but doing so will make a loud noise alerting those within. The lock, while new, is also crude, and can be picked with a bonus (**DEX: CL0**).

If the party bashes the front door open, kobolds within will hear this and prepare to attack. They await on the balcony above the statues (**area 6**) where they each have a large pile of stones and broken masonry to sling at the adventurers.

If the party enters the church quietly, the kobolds will be sleeping off their wounds, as the ogre does not treat them with kindness. Generally speaking, the kobolds are not motivated to guard the church carefully.

AREA 2: Entry Foyer

The entry foyer is overhung by a balcony that encircles the entire church and the interior of the building is in a similarly poor condition. The broken windows allow the elements in, and the once-beautiful church is now in a shambles. Most of the pews are broken, and vermin scurry everywhere. The stairway to the balcony, on your left, has collapsed.

AREA 3: Collapsed Stairway

The rubble of the collapsed stairway lies here. This is the only part of the balcony that is not intact.

Any character that gets up onto the balcony and moves within 5 feet of the broken end of the balcony risks falling. They will need to make a save (**DEX: CL0**) or fall through the balcony as the section they are standing on collapses. The fall is about 12 feet and inflicts 1d6 damage. The GM may decide that other parts of the balcony are fragile enough to collapse under their weight, especially if they are running or fighting.

Deer

SZ: M; MV 20'; SV: P
HD 2d8; AC 6 (14)
AT: Hooves (1d4)
SP: None

Bear

SZ: M; MV 20'; SV: P
HD 3d8; AC 7 (13)
AT: 2 Claws (1d6), Bite (1d8)
SP: Hug

Bear Trap (CL1)

Unless trap is spotted, the unfortunate character or mount with step in the trap and suffer 1d8 damage.

Zombies

SZ: M; MV 20'; SV: P
HD 2d8; AC 8 (12)
AT: Slam (1d8)
SP: Undead

AREA 4: Broken Old Pews

Most of the pews are broken. Some mouldy old prayer books are the only things of interest aside from several rat holes, insect nests, and vermin droppings.

There is nothing of value in the broken pews. Movement through the pews is halved and the characters cannot charge through it. Any who crouch or lay prone in this area enjoy $\frac{1}{4}$ concealment (2 AC Bonus).

AREA 5: Statues

Each statue is carved from stone, stands about six feet high and depicts a stern-looking man in priests' robes. The artistry is unremarkable. The hands are broken off and the eyes seem broken and too large.

The damage was caused by looters removing gems from the eyes and hands long ago. The statues are otherwise unremarkable.

AREA 6: Balcony

The balcony encircles the entire church and hangs about 12 feet above the floor. It appears to be about eight feet wide and has a railing of wide slats about waist high. It is continuous except for the collapsed stairway and area immediately surrounding the collapsed stairs.

Kobold

SZ: S; MV 30'; SV: P

HD: 1d4; AC 5 (15)

AT: Sling (1d4) or Bite (1d2).

SP: Darkvision 60', -1 to hit in sunlight. Each carries 1d4 sp.

The ogre intimidated several kobolds into guarding the ground level of the church, and he literally tossed them up onto the balcony so they couldn't escape.

If anyone is clever enough to parlay with the kobolds and offer to rescue them from the ogre, the kobolds will reveal the secret door behind the altar and give the PCs their silver before fleeing.

If the party fights the kobolds from the ground level of the church, the monsters enjoy $\frac{1}{2}$ concealment (4 AC Bonus) from the guardrail of the balcony.

AREA 7: Altar Area

A three-step stairway running the width of the church separates the altar area from the rest of the church interior. The altar appears to be a plain box of wood built into the floor. Behind it on the back wall is an ornate, once-beautiful storage cabinet in extreme disrepair. To the left and right of the storage chest, ruined and mouldy old tapestries in very poor condition hang along the walls. They are too rotten to discern the images they once displayed.

AREA 8: Altar

The altar has a secret compartment, which may be found if the altar is thoroughly searched (CL1). It has, however, been looted years ago and contains only dust.

AREA 10: Secret Staircase

One tapestry conceals a secret door leading down into the cellar. Unless someone deliberately looks behind the tapestry, finding the door will be more difficult (**WIS: CL2**). If the tapestry is removed, the poor condition of the church walls renders the task of finding the hidden passageway considerably easier, and the player receives a bonus to their roll (**WIS: CL0**).

Once located, the secret door opens easily and quietly, swinging towards the altar and revealing a curved stairway leading down to the church's cellar and priest's retreat. If the party doesn't remove the tapestry and can't find the secret door, allow the tapestry to fall off the wall when/if the storage cabinet collapses.

THE ABANDONED CHURCH - LOWER LEVEL

When the PCs descend the staircase, they will find themselves in a storage cellar, **area 11**. The stairway takes them about 25 feet below the church above.

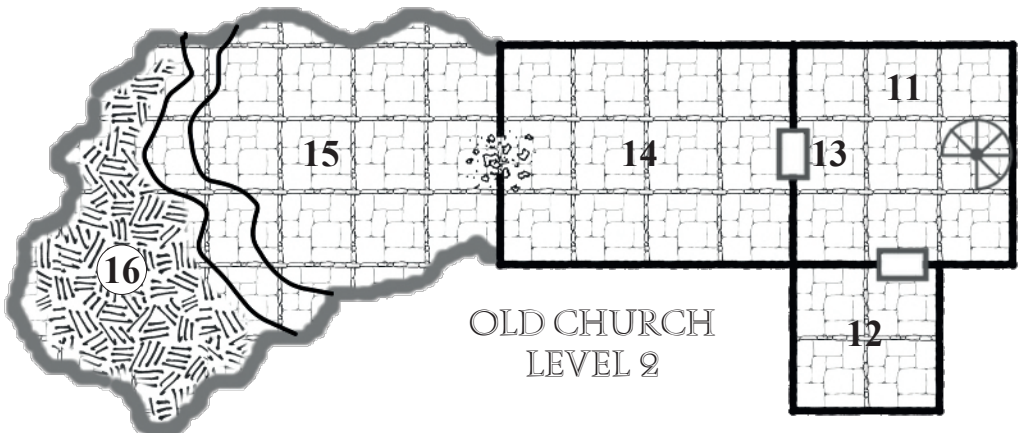
AREA 11: Cellar

This cellar is filled with rotten old crates and barrels of food, wine and other supplies, between shafts of dust and cobwebs. There are two doors, one in the centre of the west wall, and one in the centre of the north wall. Both are closed, though faint torchlight can be seen coming out from under the door in the north wall.

AREA 12: Retreat/Library

This small room is lined with bookshelves, faded and rotten paintings, and three once plush comfy chairs. There is a small table in the corner, stained long ago with spilled wine or perhaps blood. Everything is in some sort of decay.

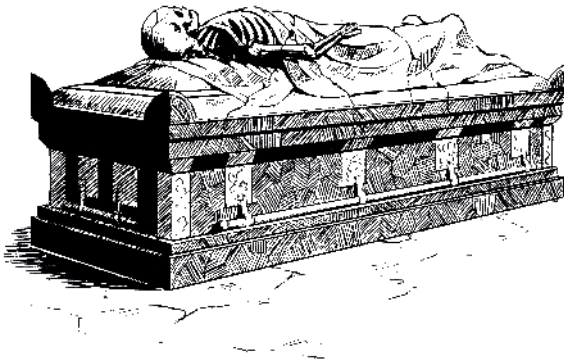
If any of the characters inspect the bookshelves, they will find most of the books are so old, mouldy, and uncared for, that they disintegrate entirely when handled. A thorough search (**CL0**), or *detect magic* spell,



will reveal a *scroll of cure light wounds* hidden behind several mundane books on the bottom shelf.

AREA 13: Crypt Door

This door is locked and trapped. If any character tries the lock without disabling the trap first, they risk being pricked by a needle trap hidden in the lock. Forcing the door open (**Str: CL0**) will bypass the trap. If any character is struck by the needle, it will leave a sticky residue on the wound. Anyone familiar with poisons, or is brave enough to taste the residue, will discover it to be harmless honey.



Needle Trap (CL1)

Failure to detect/disarm the trap causes it to go off if an attempt is made to open the door. A Dex Save will be required to avoid the needle once the trap goes off. The needle inflicts on 1 point of damage.

AREA 14: Crypt

It is noticeably more humid and dank here, and it smells like a graveyard. By the light of the two torches hanging on the walls, you see that you are now in a crypt. The walls to the sides are the original natural cave, but the far wall consists of masonry that has collapsed to reveal the rest of the natural cave beyond. The crypt chamber is about as wide as the cellar, but the far end is difficult to make out because it is dark beyond the torch's light. Where you now stand, there are eight ruined sarcophagi, broken open and looted long ago. A single lighted torch hangs on each wall in the middle of the sarcophagi. An ominous growl echoes throughout the chambers.

This is large chamber, about as wide as the cellar and perhaps twice as long. However, this will be hard to tell because of the darkness within, and the two torches will nullify any enhanced vision to operate effectively in the dark. The nearest section to the door is a burial crypt for the church with the far end opening up into a natural chasm.

The ogre awaits the party in the next section (**area 15**), and will attack when they appear to be the most vulnerable. The growl belongs to the invisible fadewolf, of course. It will charge the strongest-looking warrior, first becoming visible upon attacking. To avoid being surrounded, the wolf will wait for the party to come closer or for the ogre to charge them. It will attack regardless after three rounds.

Ogre

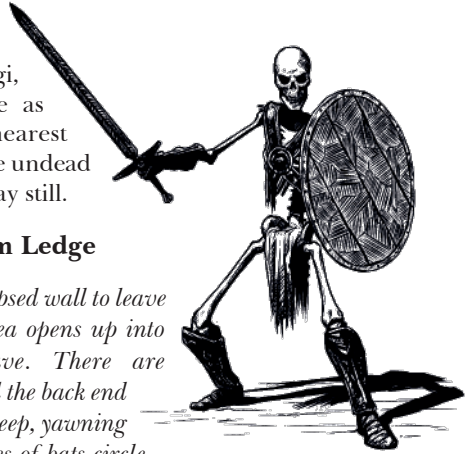
*SZ: L; MV 20'; SV: P
HD 4d8; AC 5 (15)
AT: Great Club (2d6+3)
or fists (1d10)
SP: Low Light Vision*

Fadewolf

*SZ: L; MV 50'; SV: P
HD 2d8; AC 7 (13)
AT: Bite (1d8)
SP: Twilight Vision,
Invisibility*

If the party retreats, “Fianne” (really Zagroth in disguise) will cry for help from the ledge. The characters won’t be able to see the ledge until they get closer to it (**area 15**).

If anyone touches or disturbs any of the sarcophagi, the bodies inside will rise as skeletons, attacking the nearest living thing. If Turned, these undead return to their graves and lay still.



AREA 15: Cave & Chasm Ledge

As you move through the collapsed wall to leave the crypt, you see that the area opens up into an unworked, natural cave. There are stalagmites off to the right and the back end of the cave is dominated by a deep, yawning chasm. Above this abyss, scores of bats circle and screech in the darkness.

The stalagmites offer ½ concealment to small creatures (4 AC Bonus) and ¼ concealment to medium-sized creatures (2 AC Bonus). If “she” isn’t doing so already, “Fianne” (the doppelganger) will begin crying out for help when the party enters the cavern.

Those who venture to the edge of the cave floor will see the ledge about 10 feet down, and beyond that, the deep crevasse that fills the back end of the cave.

From the edge of the cave floor, you can see a narrow ledge about 10 feet below where you are standing. On this ledge is a young woman crying out for help! She’s wearing a dirty dress and is skinny, with long straight blond hair and pale skin.

Since Zagroth’s plan hinges on the PCs “rescuing” him, he will kill the ogre or fadewolf if necessary by tossing them into the chasm with a man catcher he has hidden on the ledge. If he needs to do this, Zagroth will toss the man catcher into the chasm as well to make sure no one finds it. Characters paying attention may notice that the monsters didn’t simply slip off the edge (**Wis: CL2**)

Note: If the party is large or strong, feel free to increase the hit points listed, or add another fadewolf or some additional kobolds with slings hiding amongst the stalagmites. Should kobold slingers hit one of the sarcophagi in **area 14** with an errant stone, the undead will rise as detailed earlier.

AREA 16: Chasm

This pit is too deep for torch or lantern light to penetrate the darkness.

It is 70 feet deep from the ledge on which “Fianne” is “stuck,” or 80 feet deep from the floor of the cave.

Skeleton

SZ: M; MV 30; SV: P

HD 1d12; AC 8 (12)

AT: Weapon (1d6)

SP: Undead, ½ dmg from slashing & piercing weapons

THE RETURN TO THE MANOR

At his point, Zagroth, disguised as Fianne Goodhampshire, will lay out his lies to the party in order to manipulate them into sneaking into Goodhampshire manor and to release Gremulak.

When they find “her” on the ledge, “Fianne” will want to leave as quickly as possible, pretending to be terrified of the ogre, the darkness, and the hideous bats. She wants to go upstairs and out into the sunlight before explaining her ordeal and asking the group for help.

If the party decides to explore the chasm anyway, the bats will harass them and “Fianne” will beg to return home “before the evil imposter murders her father.” The party will be told whatever lies they need to hear in order to convince them to return to Goodhampshire manor and rescue Lord Goodhampshire as soon as possible.

If the party insists on exploring the chasm, or begins to climb down its edge, there is a risk that they will discover the place Zagroth is hiding the real Fianne. If this happens, Zagroth will have to change his tactics. Still disguised as Fianne, “she” will scream for them not to leave her behind and will climb down with them. “Fianne” will be as much of a whiny pest as possible, pretending to slip and fall while “accidentally” dislodging stones to fall on the characters (**1d3 dmg**) while they are climbing. The GM may require the players to roll saves for their characters in order to dodge the falling stones or to avoid falling if they are hit.

Should the party continue and find Zagroth’s lair on the lower ledge, skip to that section of the adventure and proceed. Zagroth will maintain his disguise as Fianne and follow them in. He will try to keep them away from his room and the secret laboratory, while trying to steer them towards “Gladys.”

The frightened young girl thanks you profusely for your help and regains her composure as you make your way upstairs and out of the church. Out in the sunlight, you see that she is a pretty, young woman of about 17, slight with long blond hair and fair skin, wearing a dark green dress that is dirty from her ordeal. She demonstrates a poise and strength of character that is inspiring coming from someone so young. She explains, “Several days ago my insane uncle, Lord Jarek, stormed the manor with several mercenaries and captured my father! He’s got a magical mask that makes him look like my father. I think he’s trying to take his place! I saw his men take my father to the deepest part of the manor’s dungeon and lock him away in a secret chamber. I was hiding there, but they saw me and tried to capture me too, but I escaped. The ogre caught me in the woods. I think it was part of their group. You must help me rescue my father! I’ll do it myself if I need to!” She storms off back towards the manor.

If the characters question her about what she knows, Fianne explains that she has the run of the manor and has been sneaking out for years through a secret exit to play in the woods and meet other children

Swarm of Bats

They swarm the area wreaking havoc, causing 1 damage per round. A save (Wis: CLL) is needed in order to act within the swarm

from the hamlet. She will tell them she's never trusted her uncle, whom she believes is evil.

Presumably, the party will agree to help. She takes the spare horse (if one remains at this point) and leads them back to the manor via a barely visible trail in the forest.

It is obvious that the girl is very familiar with the forest and she leads you quickly along a seldom used trail through dense woods. After riding only about two and a half hours, she signals you all to stop at a small hill several hundred yards from Goodhampshire manor and to hide within the foliage. She clears away some brush and reveals a narrow cave. "We can sneak in through here. Stay alert though, sometimes animals and things sneak in through here too." She scurries off down the narrow tunnel.

Chivalrous characters may offer to take the lead, of course. The tunnel is narrow enough that the party must leave their horses behind and walk down the tunnel single file. It is not straight, and has a slight decline, but probably only a dwarf would really notice these details. It is about 300 yards long, and consists mostly of natural cave formations. Only a few spots have been worked to connect the natural openings to form a long tunnel. It ends at the foundation of the manor, about 40 feet underground.

Giant Rat

SZ: S; MV 30; SV P
HD: 1d4; AC 7 (13)
AT: Bite (1d4)
SP: 5% are diseased

About a third of the way through the tunnel, the party will likely encounter (at the GM's discretion) some Giant Rats (1d8). They will flee down the tunnel to avoid fighting. If the party chases the rats heedlessly, they could accidentally stumble into some webbing instead. When this webbing is disturbed, a couple of spiders will slink down and drop onto the second or third characters in line. The spiders are the size of cats and their black exoskeletons make them difficult to see in the dark tunnel.

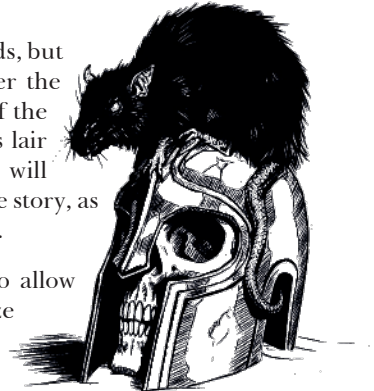
Giant Spider

SZ: S; MV 20; SV: P
HD 1d4; AC 8 (12)
AT: Bite (1d2)
SP: Poison

The tunnel ends at a wall of large stone blocks. Two blocks are missing, leaving an opening through which Fianne slips easily. Fianne informs you that you are entering the lowest level of the manor, and will be moving upwards through the basement and then into the manor itself. She insists that, since anyone you encounter will be one of her father's men and not her uncle's, you must not harm them as they are all good men and do not know about the betrayal.

Zagroth cares nothing for these guards, but pretending to do so will help further the deception that he is Fianne. Again, if the PCs have already explored Zagroth's lair and rescued the real Fianne, she will believe Zagroth's lies and tell the same story, as she actually does care about the men.

The opening is just large enough to allow regular-sized characters to squeeze through.



GOODHAMPSHIRE MANOR FOUNDATION (LEVEL 2)

AREA 17: Entry & Outer Hallway

You find yourself in the corner intersection of two hallways. The halls are about ten feet wide and about that high. The walls are all of the same thick stone blocks that make up the foundation.

This is where the party enters and where the tunnel meets the foundation. This outer hallway leads to the secret door to Gremulak's prison, near **area B**. The crypt (**area 20**) is visible through the secret peephole at **area C**, though this peephole is difficult to find from inside the crypt (**Wis: CL6**).

If the party have not fought and killed the rats encountered in the tunnel, there is a 1 in 6 chance they will encounter them here in **area A, B, or C**. If it appears that they are cornered, they will fight to the death.

AREA 18: Secret Compartment

This secret niche is unknown to all except for Antar Goodhampshire himself. It is so well hidden that searching for it would prove to be challenging (**Wis: CL2**). Inside this tiny niche are an *Animated Shield* and a *Sword of Light +1* (GM's discretion as to the sword type). The sword lies in an ornate sheath that magically keeps any blade housed in it sharp. These were Antar's armaments when he first began adventuring years ago.

AREA 19: Stairway Chamber

This room, connecting to the crypt, has nothing of interest except the spiral staircase that leads upstairs.

AREA 20: Crypt

There are three sarcophagi and two benches for mourners. The walls have several unlit torches in sconces.

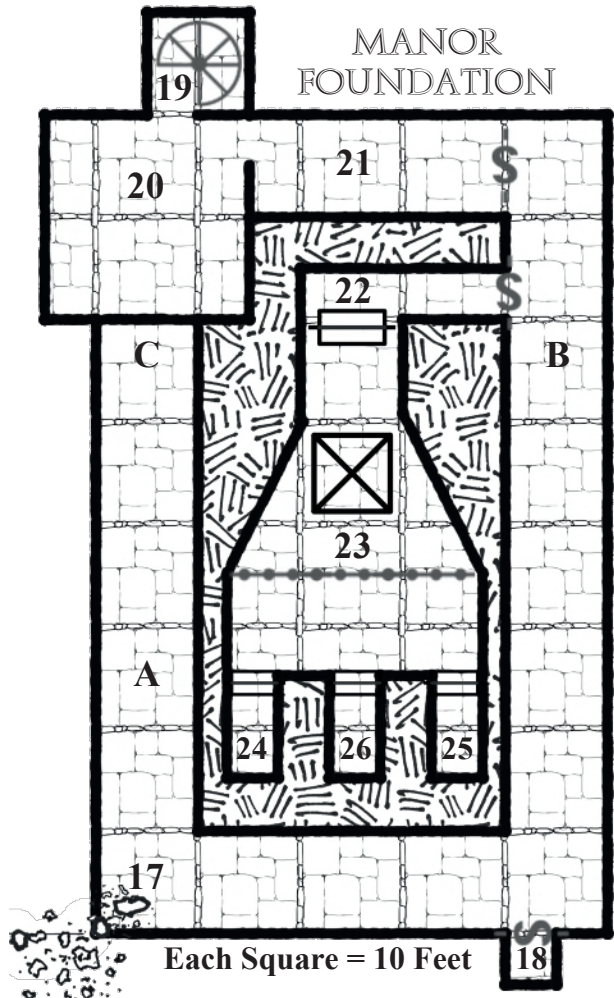
Most who lay eyes upon this room assume it to be the Goodhampshire family Crypt, waiting for family members. The real purpose of this crypt is to mask Gremulak's prison.

Animated Shield

Upon command, shield floats within 2 feet of the wielder, protecting them as if they were using it themselves.

Sword of Light

Upon command, the blade of the sword will emit a glow and shine as brightly as a torch.



AREA 21: Storage Room

This 20' x 10' room is full of miscellaneous items such as ropes, chalk, candles and ten-foot poles.

The GM may stock the room with anything they desire, of course. A secret door opens to the outer hallway (**area 17**).

AREA 22: Secret Hallway

This hall is accessible from the secret door near **area B**. In the middle is a tripwire trap that shoots arrows at whoever trips the wire.

The door at the end is locked and the lock is of high quality (**CL2 to pick**). The door can also be broken down (**Str: CL0**) or, failing that, hacked down by weapons in a turn.

AREA 23: Large Room

This room begins with a 10' x 10' foyer, with walls that slope outward to open up to a 30' width. A large portcullis bisects the middle of the room and three doors are visible beyond it on the far wall. The gate in the centre of the portcullis is propped open by a halberd. You see that the portcullis mechanism is on the same side of the portcullis where you now find yourself.

Tripwire (CL0)
Tripping the wire will cause an arrow to shoot out and hit the first character that set off the trap (1d6). Successful save to negate.

Just at the point where the room widens, the floor is rigged to fall into a 10' deep pit if a regular sized character steps on it. The three doors beyond are all locked (**CL0 to pick**) but they are of lighter construction and could be broken down if necessary. The three doors look identical to one another.

Pit Trap (CL0)
Failure to avoid the trap results in 2d6 falling damage. Save for 1/2 damage.

AREA 24: Alarm Room

If anyone enters this room, the whole floor shifts down about half an inch under their weight and a large bell starts tolling loudly. It is audible anywhere inside and within 100 yards of the manor. If the party question Fianne about it, "she" will honestly say that she had no idea about it, and urge them instead to try the other doors to find and rescue her father before Jarek's men arrive. Both the real Fianne and Zagroth the doppelganger are unaware of this trap. If the real Olai Keem is in the manor, he'll respond to this alarm by sending guards to investigate. They will arrive in 1d6+1 rounds. Keem himself will arrive in 10 minutes if the party hasn't made their way up to the manor above.

AREA 25: Pit Trap Room

If the door is opened slowly, as by a rogue picking the lock, they will see there is no floor to speak of, and the room is mostly a 20' deep pit. If a character breaks down the door open, they must immediately make a save to avoid falling into the pit. Both the real Fianne and Zagroth the doppelganger are unaware of this trap.

AREA 26: Gremulak's Prison

This room is dominated by a large iron sarcophagus with a small slit through which you can just make out a narrow strip of someone's face within. The entire thing is bolted shut and secured to the floor. The room is dusty and full of cobwebs. When the door is opened, Fianne shrieks, "I am here for you, poppa!" and runs to the metal coffin. She begs you all to pry the lid off the sarcophagus.

Zagroth, in any shape, cannot and will not touch the coffin. If any of the players were suspicious about the true nature of "Fianne", their characters may notice this fact (**Wis: CL4**). Other characters might notice that the dust and cobwebs about the room have not been disturbed recently (**Wis: CL2**).

Any single party member can make an attempt to break the lid off the coffin (**Str: CL4**) but if any other character helps them, they can make the roll at a bonus.

The man in the metal coffin leaps out and hugs Fianne. He is dressed only in a Scale Mail kilt and knee-high leather boots. He is tall, hugely muscled, deeply tanned and covered in hundreds of scars. His flowing long hair and beard are the red of a blazing sunset. His grey-green eyes sparkle with emotion and he grins widely.

If any player states that they are looking, allow them to notice that this man's teeth are filed to shark-like points (**Wis: CL0**).

Fianne addresses you all. "Meet Antar Goodhampshire, my dear father. Thank you all so very much for helping me rescue him!"

This man is actually Gremulak. He recognized the doppelganger and knows of Zagroth's plan because of their constant telepathic contact. As the party exchange pleasantries with "Antar Goodhampshire" and "Fianne" (hurriedly if the alarm is sounding), Gremulak and Zagroth will inch towards the door and when they're in a good position, dash through it, shutting it behind them (assuming it is still intact). The door doesn't lock but may slow the party down somewhat. The villains run off, and Gremulak grabs the halberd holding open the portcullis as he runs by. This will allow the gate to slam shut as they run away.

Both Zagroth and Gremulak can make it out of the large room and into the outer hallway in one round. As the party will likely feel compelled to give chase, it may be possible to reach the portcullis as it is coming down (**Dex: CL0**). Any character may lift and hold the portcullis with a successful save (**Str: CL0**) but this will put them another two rounds behind the villain.

Anyone who catches up to engage Gremulak in combat will almost certainly be beaten. Gremulak will not hesitate to chop them down with the halberd and leave them for Zagroth to finish off if they attempt to stop him. Zagroth will assist in any way he can and will sow confusion at the very least by maintaining his disguise as Fianne, and may even

Zagroth the Doppelganger

*SZ: M; MV 30; SV: P
HD 4d8; AC 5 (15)
AT: Shortsword (1d6) or Slam (1d12)
SP: Shapechanger, Detect Thoughts, Rogue Abilities.
Carries a **Ring of Invisibility**.*

Gremulak the Undying

*SZ: M; MV 30; SV: All
HD 10d10; AC 6 (14)
AT: Halberd (1d8+3)
SP: Undying (regenerates 1 hp / round and turns to impervious stone if killed. Will return to life at full health after 3d12+12 hours), Telepathy with thanes. Equipped with Scale Mail Kilt and boots.*

try to explain away “her father’s” hurried exit as a thirst for revenge and justice. Zagroth may change form to disguise himself as one of the PCs to confuse them, and he can turn invisible with his *ring of invisibility* if needed. As a last resort, Zagroth will even use his body to shield Gremulak from missile fire or spells, though he will turn invisible before sacrificing his life. He will avoid being seen transforming as the knowledge of his shape-shifting power undermines his ability to deceive the party.

The balance of this section will be spent running after Gremulak and Zagroth. These scenes should be played at a breakneck pace to make them exciting, dangerous, and fun! Gremulak will move up through the manor and chop down anyone in his way while Zagroth will do all that he can to confuse the enemy and, if possible even turn the guards against the party by accusing them of being the real kidnappers. Should Zagroth fear for his life and feel cornered, he will fight until he can seize the opportunity to escape.

GOODHAMPSHIRE MANOR CELLAR (LEVEL 1)

This level is the manor’s cellar. It is used mostly for storage though Antar and Jarek post guards, ostensibly to protect the family crypt in case the manor is raided. The real reason is to guard against raiders storming the manor to free Gremulak. Guards will patrol the area and there is a 1 in 4 chance that a guard will be encountered in **area G**. The guards will attempt to capture the party rather than kill them as long as the party isn’t using deadly force against the guards.

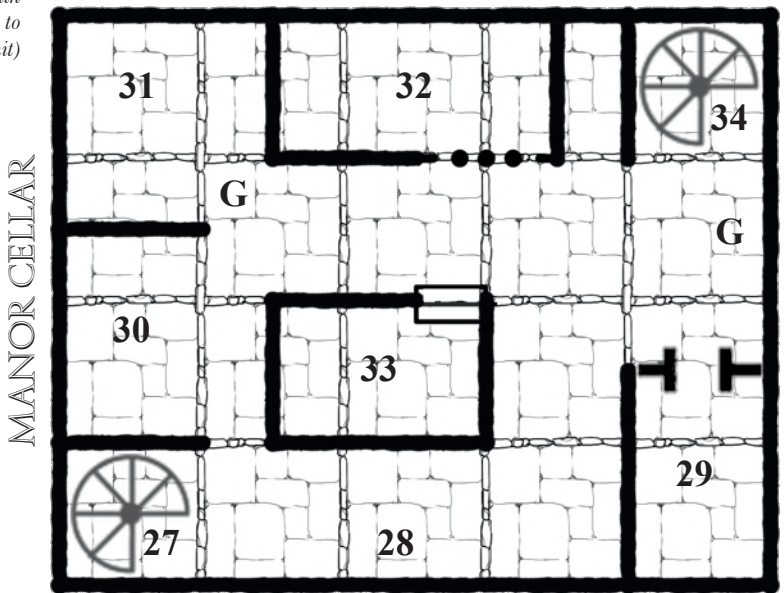
Guard

SZ: M; MV 30; SV: P

HD: 1d8; AC 9 (11)

AT: Baton (1d6) or Man Catcher (1d4)

SP: Immobilization with Man Catcher (Dex Save to negate if hit)



Each Square = 10 Feet

AREA 27: Stairs

These stairs connect the cellar to the crypt.



AREA 28: Guard Station

Two to three guards sit at a table with three stools. A rack on the wall holds two man catchers, six batons, one sap, and one short sword.

AREA 29: Root Cellar

This is a storage area for potatoes, carrots, beets, turnips, and other root vegetables.

AREA 30: Firewood

This is a large pile of firewood, about four cords.

AREA 31: Dry Goods

This area contains sacks and barrels of flour, dried beans, and the like.

AREA 32: Wine Cellar

This area is sectioned off with a thin wood cage with a locked door (**CL0 to pick or broken open**). It contains Antar Goodhampshire's collection of fine wines. A thorough search or *Detect Magic* spell will reveal a *Potion of Flying*.

AREA 33: Armoury

The door to this small room has two locks, both of which are of high quality (**CL5 to pick**). The door is made of is reinforced oak (**Str: CL4 to break down**) If the party enters this room, they find that it is full of weapons, wood shields, and sets of leather armour.

AREA 34: Stairs to Manor

These stairs lead up the audience chamber where the party first met Chancellor Olai Keem.

LORD GOODHAMPSHIRE IS DEAD!

There are several ways to proceed depending on how events have unfolded thus far. Ideally, the players realize the deception of the doppelganger and will need to clear their names as well as rescue the real Fianne, who is still missing!

If the GM decides that Keem was impersonated by the Doppelganger all along, then it's simple enough to have the villain duck aside at some point during the chase and transform into Keem's likeness. Zagroth would still be motivated to steer them to his lair in order to eliminate them. The GM can use Keem in the following scene very much in the same manner regardless of whether or not it is truly Keem.

If the players realize that there is a shape shifter involved, have chased Zagroth away, or don't trust Keem for some reason, the GM can still use the butler to explain that Fianne is still missing and that Keem has disappeared as well.

With regards to Gremulak, it is likely that he has been able to evade the party. Assuming the party hasn't been apprehended yet, they will find a bloody trail of guards left in Gremulak's wake. The guards will eventually be surrounded and captured.

If the party manages to keep up with Gremulak, they will witness him chopping the guards down as he runs upstairs. Pressing on, the party will be able to witness him murdering Antar Goodhampshire. The GM should embellish this with some combat rolls as opposed to exercising a rule by fiat, but any attempt to prevent this murder from happening will fail. Once Antar is killed, Gremulak will concentrate on escaping rather than kill any of the characters. He will run off laughing, manage to steal a horse, and ride off quickly before the party can be captured by the surviving guards.

In both these scenarios, the party will be escorted to the audience hall where they will find the Chancellor and several others gathered around the body of an older man.

Everyone is in a panic, shouting that some wild red-haired man has killed Antar Goodhampshire. You are recognized immediately and the party is called over closer. People are surrounding the body of an old man on the floor with his chest hacked open. Blood covers the floor. The dead man was tall and muscular, with a neat white goatee, and very thin white hair. The voice of Chancellor Keem says, "Antar Goodhampshire has been murdered!"

Allow a moment for the players to be confused or piece things together.

Keem asks you, "What has happened? Where is Fianne?"

Keem will be fair with party members but will take them to task if they have killed any guards. Although Keem has already deduced much of the truth, he asks the characters to describe what took place. Allow the players to role-play this, and let them ask questions of Keem. Unless the party is acting confrontational or evasive, Keem will answer their

questions honestly and will tell them the real story of Goodhampshire manor and Gremulak the Undying. He will explain that a doppelganger named Zaharrm het Zagroth is a known thane of Gremulak and that the “girl” they rescued must have been Zagroth in disguise. He will deduce that Jarek must also be dead, and that Zagroth has been masquerading as the knight for “who knows how long.”

He will conclude by excusing the party of any wrongdoing since it is clear that they were deceived while making an honest effort to rescue the person they thought was Fianne – a deception that he, as well as Fallarian Greyskies, and Antar Goodhampshire, also fell for.

He will ask them if they have any idea where the real Fianne may be. Hopefully, the players will recall that Zagroth (disguised as Fianne) insisted that they not investigate the chasm beneath the church. If someone mentions it, Keem will advise that it is their only clue and they should look there first. He will add that it makes sense that the villainous doppelganger would have a hideout in the ghost town of Thaolin, where people actively avoid.

If asked, Keem will state that he cannot give the party their reward as they have not delivered Fianne safely. He will also explain that, in order to make up for their part in Antar Goodhampshire’s death, they must find and rescue Fianne.

If the party found Goodhampshire’s sword and shield (**area 18**), Keem will demand them back if they do not cooperate with him. If they volunteer to rescue Fianne, he will tell them the command to activate the magical shield and bestow the items to the party in good faith.

If the party refuses, or were especially destructive or belligerent, it might be more appropriate for Keem to banish them and for the adventure to end here. The GM should try to avoid this scenario, which will almost certainly be less fun, though the following might make it possible for them to exonerate themselves.

One of the Manor’s guards approaches Keem and hands him a red silk glove (right hand) monogrammed with a “Z” on the back of the hand, and a scroll. Keem explains that the red glove is Zagroth’s calling card, as he unfurls the scroll. He reads it silently, then hands it to (the nearest PC).

Keem clearly expects the party to go rescue the real Fianne. If needed, he offers the characters 300 gp each and reinstates the other previously mentioned rewards. Keem reiterates that there are no other heroes available for this rescue and implores you to rescue the girl.

Should the party refuse to go find Fianne, Keem tells them to begone and never return to the hamlet of Goodhampshire. If they ever do return, they will be attacked on sight and chased out. As the party leave Goodhampshire, they can spot Keem galloping off on horseback, riding northward wearing ill-fitting armour.

If the party agrees to rescue Fianne, Keem will thank them and offer each a **Potion of Healing**, which he takes out of the desk. He will then

sit at his desk and quickly jot a note, fold it, and seals it with melted wax and his signet ring. He will give this to the party and asks them to give it to Zagroth or Gremulak if they can. If asked, Keem will supply the party with ropes, pitons, and other rappelling gear.

If the any of the party breaks the seal to read the note, it reads:

“Come if you dare to the manor for your ransom dog. I will never rest until you both are dead and damned to the nine hells!” Signed Olai Keem.

If the GM decides Keem has been the doppelganger all along, and the PCs read the note at the end of the adventure, perhaps tease them by reading them this note instead:

“You fools have been most interesting pawns, and master Gremulak and I appreciate your help. If you live long enough to read this, I will enjoy killing you later!” Signed Zaharrm het Zagroth.

RETURN TO THE CHASM & ZAGROTH’S LAIR

Kobold Zombie

SZ: M; MV 30; SV: P

HD 1d8; AC 8 (12)

AT: Slam (1d8)

SP: Undead

At this juncture, the party returns to the lower level of the abandoned church to explore the chasm. If so desired, a random encounter may be added utilizing Encounter Table from Page 7.

Depending on how long it takes for the previous events to unfold, it will likely be dusk or night time by the time the party arrives to the old church. The haunted and scary nature of the ghost town of Thaolin will be more pronounced with the creaking of trees and the feeling of being watched.

Skeleton

SZ: M; MV 30; SV: P

HD 1d12; AC 8 (12)

AT: Weapon (1d6)

SP: Undead, ½ dmg from slashing & piercing weapons

In the gloom of night, the rotten shell of the church is foreboding in its silence and desolation. A ghastly chill and unnatural silence seem to emanate from the dilapidated building. It seems to loom up from a thick blanket of low ground fog, as if floating. The broken windows and columns make it look like the face of a giant sneering beast with huge, jagged fangs. The front door hangs open for you like a gaping maw.

Once the PCs enter the church...

As you make your way through the belly of the church, it feels as if a thousand eyes follow your every move. The skittering of clawed feet can be heard everywhere, but you can never quite see anything moving in your line of sight. Rats you tell yourselves. It’s just the rats.

If there were any bodies of kobolds slain from the previous encounter, they have now risen as zombies. Furthermore, any undead from the crypt that haven’t been destroyed previously will rise if their sarcophagi are disturbed.

When the party makes their way back to the chasm, they may find scaling down the rock face somewhat of a challenge. The fall is far enough to kill anyone who slips, however the stone is rough enough to grant a bonus to anyone who tries to climb or scale down its surface.

If the party inspects the lower part of the chasm, they will find the second ledge (**area 35**) near the bottom. This ledge is 50 feet below the upper ledge (**area 16**) or 60 feet below the cave floor (**area 15**).

Once down, the party will find the entry to Zagroth's lair and the only immediate concern will be Gladys. Gladys is the name Zagroth gave to his gelatinous cube – a large and mindless creature composed of ooze that has formed into a natural cubic shape. Gladys is likely too powerful of a foe for an inexperienced party to take on. They may run into it almost anywhere, as it wanders the complex freely, except for areas blocked off by the beads of yellow paste which prevents it from leaving. However, should the party find the secret laboratory, they should be able to figure out how to control the gelatinous cube and the nature of the yellow paste. Once inside the complex (beyond **area 37**), a perceptive party member may notice that the floors, walls, and ceilings are spotless. This is a clue that a gelatinous cube lurks nearby.

Because Zagroth overfeeds it, there are many rat, bat, and kobold bones, coins, and other detritus floating around inside Gladys, making it more visible than would be typical for a gelatinous cube. Notably, Jarek Goodhampshire's corpse is still fresh enough to be recognizable and mostly intact despite parts of his skeleton starting to show.



Gelatinous Cube

*Size: L; MV: 20'; SV: P
HD 4d10; AC 9 (11)
AT: Slam (1d4) or Engulf
(Dex Save to negate)
SP: Acid, Paralysis,
Immunity to Electricity,
and Partial Immunity to
Cold*

AREA 35: Second Ledge

This ledge is about eight feet wide. It is covered in bat guano, rat droppings, small bones, and other waste. A small opening leads into a cave or tunnel in the face of the cliff.

AREA 36: Entry Hall

This corridor is about 10 feet wide and tall, it stretches about 60 feet to the first chamber. It is filthy with guano, rat droppings, and other nasty things near the door, though there is less of a mess as you proceed down the hall's length. There is no door at the end of the hall; the corridor simply opens into a large chamber. At the threshold to this chamber, there is a thick bead of yellow paste running the width of the hallway.

If the PCs inspect the paste, they find that it is sticky, smells slightly of lilac, and is harmless.

AREA 37: Statue Chamber

This room is about 30 feet by 30 feet, with a ceiling about 15 feet high. The centre of the room is dominated by a 10-foot square dais about five feet high, topped with a life-sized statue that you recognize as Gremulak the Undying. There are open doorways in the middle of each wall.

The PCs won't recognize Gremulak if they come here directly from the cave instead of releasing him in the manor first. If a player asks, or a character succeeds in an unmodified save (**WIS: CL0**), inform them that the floor and walls are absolutely spotless, that not even dust is to be found in the dungeon.

Needle Trap (CL1)

Failure to detect/disarm the trap causes it to go off if an attempt is made to open the door. A Dex Save will be required to avoid the needle once the trap goes off. The needle inflicts paralysis for 2d4 x 10 minutes; Con Save negates.

AREA 38: Strong Door

This door locked. It is carved from a thick slab of solid stone, with massive iron hinges.

It is also trapped. Any character that tries the lock without disabling the trap first will be hit by a poisoned needle trap concealed in the lock. The door is also quite sturdy and will prove challenging to open by force (**Str: CL4**) but doing so will effectively bypass the trap. However, the banging noise will attract the gelatinous cube.

AREA 39: Secret Laboratory

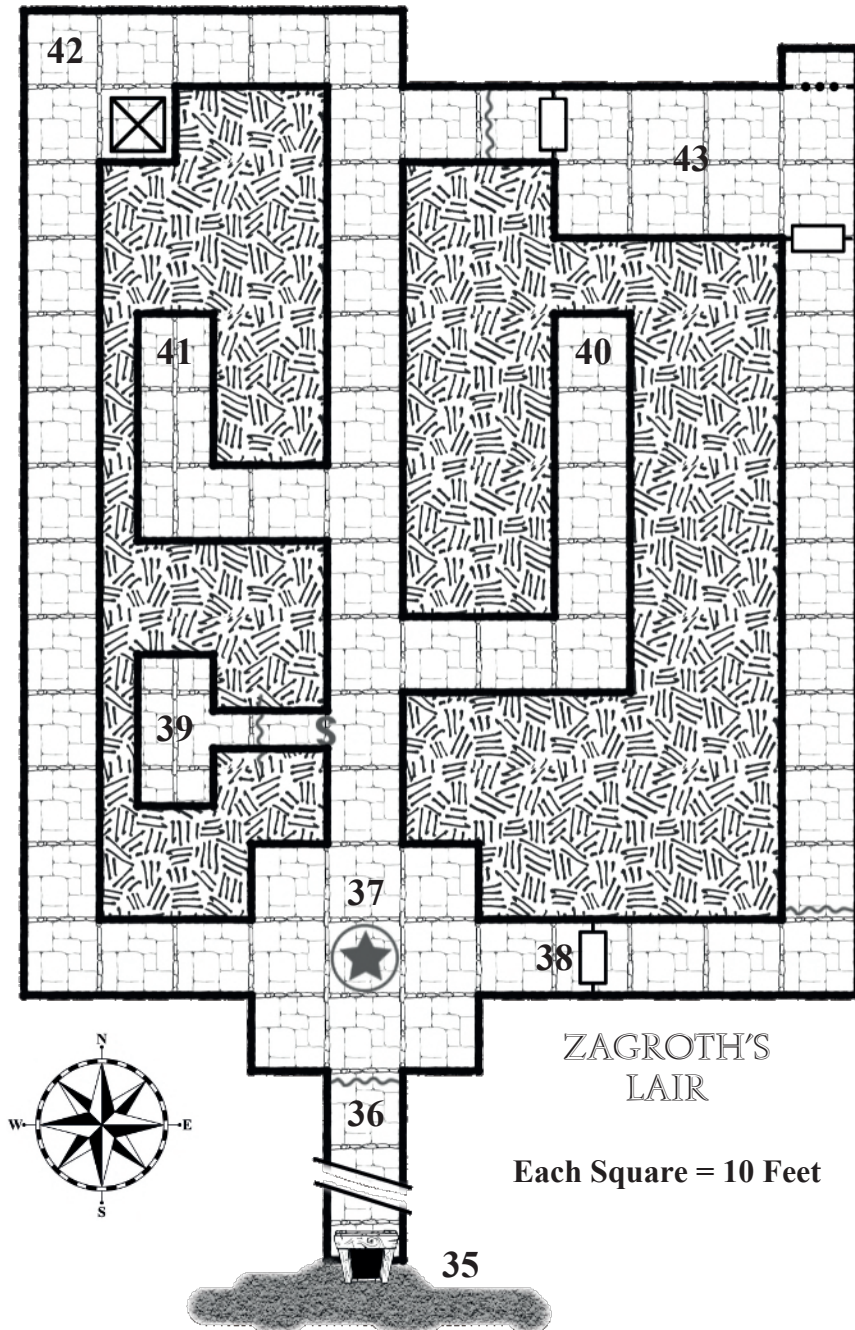
The door to this room is a secret door. There is no lock, but if a character discovers the door, they will also find the trigger to open it. The door opens out into the hallway. It reveals a cylindrical tunnel 6 feet in diameter, which leads to the laboratory in **area 39**.

A door opens into the hallway, revealing a cylindrical tunnel. A riot of odours assaults your senses – musty, flowery, burnt and everything in between. Two feet down the tunnel, you notice another bead of the yellow paste running around the diameter of the tunnel.

Assuming the PCs follow the tunnel:

The tunnel leads to a room about 12 by 20 feet in size. There is a coal stove in the corner, cold now, and tables of bizarre laboratory equipment everywhere. The wall with the door houses several shelves with all manner of small containers. By the door is a bucket of glittering dust of some kind.

Another wall holds only three neat shelves. The top shelf has three small glass bottles filled with a turquoise liquid. The middle shelf has four tiny glass vials of a pink liquid. The bottom shelf has two clay jars with lids, both about the size of a melon. A thin leather book rests on one of the tables with a letter on top of it.



If the party reads the letter, they see that it is written to Zaharrm het Zagroth, and that it is from someone named Jortan Grieve.

The leather book contains several formulae that can be deciphered by any literate character (wizard, cleric, bard, as the GM sees fit) They give the general impression of the following:

“Repel” will force back the gelatinous cube if a PC splashes the cube with it. The gelatinous cube will immediately reverse direction. This is the turquoise liquid on the top shelf, which smells like feet. If a PC tastes the potion, it will be foul but harmless. Each bottle contains enough liquid for two splashes.

“Freeze” will immobilize the cube for one round. The cube will resume on its path the next round. This is the pink liquid on the middle shelf, which smells like grass. If a PC tastes the potion, it will be foul but harmless. Each bottle contains enough liquid for one splash.

“Barrier” is the yellow paste that prevents the cube from crossing. One of the clay jars is about half-full of the yellow paste the PCs have seen elsewhere. There is enough paste in the jar to span three of the 10-foot wide halls with a bead of the same thickness (and effect). If the PCs make a thinner bead, the cube can attempt to cross the bead (**save at CL0**), though it will take an entire round to ooze slowly over it. The other clay jar is full of high-quality sauerkraut, which has no effect on Gladys.

If the party freezes the cube with the pink liquid, then apply one or more doses of either the yellow paste or turquoise liquid while it is frozen, the cube will shrivel up and die, collapsing into an opaque, leathery hunk resembling a Halfling-sized prune. If this happens, all objects stuck in the cube will fall out as it shrivels, littering the floor with treasure (GM’s discretion as to the contents). The remains of Jarek Goodhamshire will also be ejected and retrievable for a proper burial.

Arcane spellcasters can spend 2d4+2 rounds searching the ingredients in the many small containers on the wall and find any spell components they need. Similarly, those well versed in herbal lore can find the ingredients required to make or neutralize poisons. The bucket of glittering dust is gold and diamond dust and worth about 150 gp.

AREA 40 & 41: Dead-End Hallway

This dead-end hallway contains a small pile of dead rats and bats.

Zagroth leaves food here for Gladys.

AREA 42: Pit Room

This 20 x 20 room has an open 10 x 10 foot pit in one corner.

If the party herds the gelatinous cube into this pit with the turquoise potion, it will fall in and be stuck there. It will only be able to escape by spending a week oozing out of the pit and re-forming into its cubic

Note from Grieve:

Your plan looks sound my friend. I know the Master will be pleased to be free once again! We will regain our rightful places as rulers, but those are thoughts for a later time. I have spent the better part of a month studying your pet and I believe these non-magical potions should be quite useful to you. I have left the recipes for you and if you follow the instructions to the letter, they should work just as well after the supply I brewed for you runs out. If you lose track of Gladys, sprinkle the bucket of gold filings and diamond dust about and when Gladys picks them up in her travels, she will sparkle quite visibly for several days.

shape. The cube will never fall in the pit without the characters herding it in with the potions. The party could also hide from the cube in the pit, and it will pass them by.

AREA 43: Zagroth's Room

This door is locked. It is carved from a thick slab of solid stone, with massive iron hinges.

The door is locked but can be picked or broken open (CL0).

If the doors are broken open by force, the banging noise will attract the gelatinous cube, which will approach as closely as it can to the beads of yellow paste.

Inside the room, there is a neat bed in one corner, a small bookcase, a rack of torture equipment, a small cell of iron bars, and a nice area rug that really ties the room together. The cell has shackles built into the wall, but they are not being used on the current occupant, a skinny young blond girl with long hair. She sits on a pile of straw in the corner, looking at you expectantly.

The cell's door is locked, but can be picked or broken open (CL0).

This is the real Fianne, but the party may wonder whether this is true even though she matches Keem's description. She is, of course, eager to return home, but appears brave and unshaken.

If the characters find her on their first visit to the cave below the church, she will give them the same story Zagroth would have, because she believes his lies completely. This should steer the party back to the manor to release Gremulak just like in the regular scenario.

Under the bed are piles of all manner of clothing – men's, women's, a jester's costume, monk's robes, etc. All are dirty but otherwise in good condition. Along with the clothes there is an older rusty short sword.

The bookcase has three shelves. The top shelf has several mundane books, and a spell book with one or more spells of the GM's choice. There is also a leather-bound book with a lock, but the lock can be broken open or picked with a minimum amount of effort. It is Zagroth's journal and it details the story of Gremulak, Zagroth's plans, and his personal hatred of anyone with a happy family life. It reveals that Gremulak and his thanes are over 150 years old, made nearly immortal by the eldritch magical ceremony that gave Gremulak his powers. He, in turn, can bestow powers onto three thanes. In short, the journal allows the GM to explain everything the players haven't figured out and plant seeds for future adventures.

On the second shelf there is a set of fine quality lock picks which grant a +1 bonus if used to pick a lock. They are worth about 100 gp. The bottom shelf holds five red gloves (three left, two right) embroidered with a "Z" across the back of the hands.

The rack on the wall is full of finely crafted torture implements, worth about 25 gp to the right buyer.

If any of the characters move that really nice area rug, it will reveal a trapdoor built into the room's floor. It opens easily, revealing a ladder leading down about twenty feet. At the bottom is a small room featuring a small round carpet and another tiny cell occupied by the real Olai Keem. This might cause quite a surprise unless the GM has decided to forgo this plot twist. Keem is bound and gagged, so he was unable to call for help, despite hearing people exploring the room above. If any character stands on this small round carpet for one full minute, they will teleport to an identical magic carpet in Jarek's room located back in the manor. This is how Zagroth traveled between his lair and the manor. Standing on the other carpet has the same effect, teleporting people from the manor to the lair. If the party takes the carpets and stacks them, both will disappear with a loud 'poof'.

PARTING SHOTS

Zagroth the Doppelganger

SZ: M; MV 30; SV: P

HD 4d8; AC 5 (15)

AT: Shortsword (1d6) or

Slam (1d12)

SP: Shapechanger, Detect Thoughts, Rogue Abilities.

Carries a **Ring of Invisibility**.

Swarm of Bats

They swarm the area wreaking havoc, causing 1 damage per round. A save (Wis: CLI) is needed in order to act within the swarm

Climbing Out

If the party decides to go back the way they came, and scale back up the cliff face, they will find Zagroth standing on the upper ledge. He will be angry to find them leaving his home:

You are surprised to find a man on the upper ledge. You don't recognize him, but he morphs into Fianne, then into Keem, and finally his face turns to something looking 'melted' but otherwise a featureless and pasty colour. He shouts out, "What have we here? You've ransacked my humble home I see. I will enjoy feeding you to Gladys!" He begins kicking loose stones at you!

Give the players a moment to collect themselves. Stones only do a bit of damage (1d4).

Zagroth laughs at you maniacally the whole time. This laughter begins to echo in the cave and becomes a maddening cacophony that irritates the bats hanging in the stalactites. They take flight and begin circling menacingly.

Fianne will also fight Zagroth, borrowing a bow and arrow, or hurling anything on hand. Regardless of the outcome, do not kill her off.

If the party can shoot missiles or spells at Zagroth, he will flee when hurt, promising to kill them all later. If they can't hit him, have the bats in the cave attack Zagroth for his hideous laughter and drive him off. At the GM's option, Zagroth may tag several sarcophagi as he runs out, awakening several undead for the party to deal with.

Magic Carpets

If returning to the manor via the magic carpets, the characters will have to teleport one at a time. After one or two of them have teleported to Jarek's room, they will be greeted by a man entering this chamber. This is Zagroth in the guise of Jarek Goodhampshire. By now, the party

should know that Jarek is dead. The imposter will attack immediately, but as the others keep arriving, the party should be able to overwhelm him. He may take the form of one of the other characters to confuse them, or he might call on the manor's guards to defend the one they will believe to be Jarek. When reduced to 10 or fewer hit points, Zagroth will turn invisible and flee. Under no circumstances will he allow himself to be captured or killed.

Fianne's Safe Return

When the party return Fianne to Goodhampshire manor, Keem (the real one) will greet them all warmly and thank them profusely for their help. If Keem has been killed somehow, the butler will step in and do this in his stead. He will be pleased at Fianne's return though saddened at the loss of his friend, Antar Goodhampshire, and it will be his duty to tell her. Fianne will be understandably devastated though she will take the news with aplomb.

After this initial exchange, the butler presents you with a small scroll rolled up and placed in a red glove, embroidered with the letter "Z". He explains that this was found with instructions to deliver it to you.

You fools have been most interesting pawns, and master Gramulak and I appreciate your help. If you live long enough to read this, I will enjoy killing you later!

- Zaharrm het Zagroth

Keem will honour his agreement and give the characters their rewards as agreed at the beginning of the quest, unless the party killed any of the guards. If this happened, Keem may pay them but renege on his offer for them to rest and recuperate in town, and ask them to leave the hamlet "for their own safety."

If there was any doubt, it should be clear that the party's rescue of Fianne has convinced Keem that they are good people who were deceived. Keem can become a recurring patron for the party and, if they haven't previously acquired them already, he will present Goodhampshire's sword and shield to them.

Final Words

Gremulak has been released and Zagroth has escaped and both will need to be brought to justice. The adventurers will need to bolster their strength if they have any hope of fighting and defeating Gremulak directly. Zagroth will, without a doubt, desire to eliminate the party and it is only a matter of time before vengeance is met.

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Hide in Plain Sight An Adventure for 4-6 Characters of Levels 1-3

A plan has been set in motion and brave adventurers have been called in. Rescue the princess and fight an Ogre and those behind the kidnapping ought to be a typical, run-of-the-mill job. Unbeknownst to the party, this was but the opening move to a greater plan. Distraction, deception, and misdirection will be the undoing of Goodhampshire.

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Ballista is a line of gaming material compatible with the rules of *Swords & Wizardry* published by Frog God Games, *Castles & Crusades* published by Troll Lord Games, and other old school fantasy roleplaying games.

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How To Use This Book

This is not a new game. Instead, it uses a distillation of elements found in the world's most popular fantasy roleplaying game whose roots stretch back to 1974. Elements in this book have been simplified and streamlined to offer an easy and fast-paced gaming experience. The material contained herein is compatible with the rules of *Swords & Wizardry* published by Frog God Games, *Castles & Crusades* published by Troll Lord Games, and other old school fantasy roleplaying games.

Attributes & The Game

Each player character has six attributes which will be tested throughout the game as they face different challenges. These are commonly known as saving throws or skill saves. Depending on the circumstances, the challenge or hazard in question will test a character's Strength (**Str**), Dexterity (**Dex**), Constitution (**Con**), Intelligence (**Int**), Wisdom (**Wis**), or Charisma (**Cha**). When presented in a Ballista™ Adventure, these will provide a Challenge Level (**CL**) ranked from a scale of 1 to 10 representing the difficulty. If any of these challenges originate from an opponent or creature, the Challenge Level is determined by the opponent's level or Hit Dice (**HD**). This is then added to a base of 15 resulting in a value ranging from 16-25. This is the number the player will need to match or best in order to pass their save or check. To do this, the player rolls a twenty-sided die (**d20**) and adds to it his characters level and any applicable modifiers.

It should be stressed that any challenge mentioned in the book, the affected attribute, and challenge levels are suggestions only. The Game Master (**GM**) is free to assign other challenges and difficulties.

Understanding the Encounters

All the various encounters are listed in the side margins of this book and contains shorthand which not everyone may be familiar with. They are, in the order they appear: Size (**SZ**), Movement (**MV**), Saves (**SV**), Hit Dice (**HD**), Armor Class (**AC**), Attacks (**AT**), and Special (**SP**).

Sizes are Small, Medium, and Large with the typical adventurer being in the Medium category, if using miniatures, a Medium creature occupies a 5-foot square space on a battle grid. Likewise, Movement is measured in feet and the number given will always be divisible by 5.

Saves indicate what advantages this opponent holds. Frequently, this will either be listed as Physical (**P**) or Mental (**M**) but sometimes may be specific enough to list particular attributes. The encounter in question would receive a bonus in instances when a saving throw is required against their listed Saves.

Hit Dice has two uses. One is to give a challenge / skill level to the encounter. The other is to determine health or hit points. The first number value given is the level and the hit points are determined by rolling what is indicated.

Armour Class provides two numbers and you will be using one value or the other for combat. Some systems use a descending system of Armour Class (where lower is better) and other games use ascending Armour Class. Both start at a base of AC 10.

Attacks provides the type and number of attacks and the damage they do. If the encounter hits their target, the damage is deducted from the targets hit point total.

Special simply lists any abilities, qualities, or resistances that need to be noted for the encounter in question.

Continued on back cover...



Battle

Should player characters find themselves in battle, resolving combat is relatively easy. Combat is measured in rounds and proceeds as follows:

Determine if anyone was surprised if the situation warrants it. Those who were surprised do not get to act until the following round.

Roll Initiative. A ten-sided die (**d10**) is used to determine the order of combat for the duration of battle.

Combat and Magic. In initiative order (highest to lowest), each participant may move up their movement rate and perform a single action such as attacking opponents within range, casting a spell, or another simple task. When attacking, a player rolls a twenty-sided die (**d20**) and adds their 'To Hit' bonus and relevant modifiers and measures this total against their opponents Armour Class (**AC**). If this matches or beats that number, a score is hit and damage is dealt. When a creature or opponent attacks and no 'To Hit' bonus is listed, the number of Hit Dice (**HD**) is added to the attack roll instead. Spellcasters may cast spells though some spells may require more than one round to cast and risks being interrupted.

At the of the round, a new round begins until the battle is ended.

Damage

There are two types of damage: regular and nonlethal. Regular damage comes from inflicted wounds and should this amount of damage exceed the hit point total, unconsciousness and possibly death will follow. Nonlethal damage taken are effects that could subdue and render one unconscious but will not kill a character. Save for the intervention of magic, only time and rest will allow for the healing and recuperation of any hit points lost.

Bonuses & Penalties

With any situation or challenge, there may be times where the party or a character may find themselves in either a disadvantageous position or have the upper hand. The same could be said of their adversaries. In those situations, when rolling a save or an attack, they will need to roll a bonus or penalty die (**d20**) to go along with it. In a situation where a bonus is called for, they take the best of the two rolls; a penalty would take the worst of the two.

Magic & Miscellanea

Magic and other fantastic elements are abundant in this sort of game. While the scope of these things is too broad to be covered in any detail here or the rest of the book, an easy way to handle spellcasters is to provide them with a number of magical abilities equal to 1 plus their level or Hit Dice (**HD**) and determine a Challenge Level (a scale of 1-10) for the spell or effect they are trying to create. The GM needs to take into account the scale of this magic and take into account factors such as area, range, damage, and how it much 'bends' reality around them while keeping in mind it is a fantasy setting after all. A check will need to be made to see whether or not the spell caster was successful. If the caster succeeds, opponents targeted by this magic get a save to either avoid or minimize the effects and the caster takes half the determined Challenge Level (rounded down) as nonlethal damage due to the effort. If the caster fails, the spell does not work and they receive 1 point of nonlethal damage for the attempt. Spellcasters reduced to zero hit points through the use of magic falls unconscious.

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Continued from front cover..